

Beacon Report: Growing Health recipe for success

Sow the City



Key factors for success - summary

- Develop a strong track record based on evaluated outcomes.
- A one stop shop is attractive to commissioners providing garden design and build through to therapeutic horticulture sessions.
- Be business like in your marketing and delivery.
- Develop your networks with customers and beneficiaries.

	Key factors for success	Lessons learnt
Service provision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Demonstrate a track record of service delivery. Initially this could be examples from community or school projects rather than NHS projects. ● Develop quality management systems e.g. staff training, customer feedback surveys with commissioners, and feedback from beneficiaries to ensure continuous improvement. ● Be willing to adapt to NHS ways of working e.g. health and safety. ● Provide a full package – design and consultation, construction of gardens, workshop delivery, project management and evaluation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Voluntary Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) and community growing offers good value for money for the health service compared to clinical alternatives. Monitor projects carefully and develop an evidence base for your projects.
Route to commissioning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Develop a network of NHS contacts especially senior contacts. Produce a stakeholder map so you understand who is who in large organisations. ● Adopt a professional business-like approach to your marketing with materials and a good sales pitch describing what the service is and why it matters. ● Network and attend relevant conferences, as well as attending relevant NHS team and management meetings (for example, 'Community Mental Health Team' Meetings) and ask for a short item on an agenda. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Building relationships with commissioners is essential but takes time. ● Find commissioners that can champion what you do. Invite them to projects so they can meet beneficiaries. Operational staff in the NHS understand the benefits of gardening but you need to persuade the commissioners to get the funding! ● Consulting and engaging with the local VCSE support organisations will identify networks, opportunity and help to understand the overall context. ● Access NHS funding through a variety of routes including NHS/ CCG grants programmes, commissioner panels, providing quotes for work. ● Huge amount going on and various sectors within NHS such as drug and alcohol, CAMHS etc.
Partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Develop a network of community growing projects so that NHS organisations can refer people to these across the area. ● A voluntary sector body (e.g. CVS) can help bridge the gap between VCSE and NHS and champion the VCSE sector in the health sector. ● Use established Occupational Therapy models for evaluation and partner with Occupational Therapists when delivering projects. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The health sector is a complex and takes time to understand but if you're persistent you'll learn how the system works.
Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Develop and establish a basic system for evaluating outcomes. Use the five ways to wellbeing as a framework for evaluation. ● Individual (or Personal) case studies are beneficial. ● For larger projects use clinically validated measures that record mood, anxiety, quality of life and overall wellbeing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Back up what you do using national research. ● Shout about evaluation passionately and summarise projects on an engaging 1 page document that covers all aspects. ● Pursue opportunities to be a speaker at health conferences. For example STC spoke for 15 minutes about one of our key projects at a special event organised on hospitals and VCSE organisations working more closely together, with 120 hospital and health chiefs in attendance.
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Provide wider environmental art and carpentry sessions alongside gardening sessions. 	

Background

Growing Health is a national project set up in 2012 by Garden Organic and Sustain; the alliance for better food and farming with funding from the Tudor Trust. The primary aim is to see how community food growing can be routinely used 'on prescription' by the health and social care services as a way of promoting health and wellbeing.

During the current phase of Growing Health – Recipe for Success, we are focusing on case studies of community food growing projects from around the country. These are case studies that have established, or are building funding relationships, with the local health service, including Public Health, CCGs and/or Social Service Departments. The aim is to identify and explore **key success factors** for developing these relationships, and **to share the lessons learnt** with other community growing groups around the country. Sow the City is one of these case studies.



Case Study

Sow the City

The service provision

Sow the City is an award winning social enterprise based in Manchester. Established in 2009 with a few packets of seeds and some compost, they are now a leading specialist food-growing organisation in the area. Their vision is to build a healthier city where everyone can grow their own food. Sow the City has 6-year track record of working with public health and running health focussed community growing projects and programmes.

They are a small social enterprise employing three staff, they provide all facets of starting and setting up a garden in an urban setting including consultancy, design, garden construction, training and workshops, project management and evaluation. The growing space could be anything from a community allotment through to sites managed or owned by other organisations such as housing associations. They work with the voluntary sector, local authorities, schools businesses, the health sector and housing providers. At the time of writing they have nine projects commissioned which promote health and wellbeing for different client groups. These include the following:

- 2013 - present Growing Manchester (Manchester Health and Care Commissioning)
- 2016 - present Ecotherapy service (Rochdale CCG)
- 2017 Green Mind project (Greater Manchester Mental Health Trust/ Manchester Health and Care Commissioning)
- 2018 Crumpsall Vale Intermediate Care Unit Wellbeing Garden (Pennine Acute Care NHS Trust)
- 2018 Prospect Place at Birch Hill Hospital (Pennine Care Trust)
- 2018 The Grange Wellbeing Garden (Manchester Local Care Organisation)
- 2018 Hospital Beds Emotional Health and Wellbeing Project (Salford CCG)
- 2018 Achieve Asset Recovery Fund (Salford CCG/ Greater Manchester Mental Health Trust)

- 2018 Achieve Asset Recovery Fund (Trafford CCG / Greater Manchester Mental Health Trust)

Commissions are typically for one year only with some longer term commissions e.g. Growing Manchester.

“...such amazing projects. And an overwhelming sense of pride in the creation of beautiful & productive growing spaces” Ruth Bromley, Chair Manchester Health and Care Commissioning visiting Growing Manchester sites.

The devolution in Greater Manchester has meant that there has been a general move towards the voluntary services providing services. Sow the City have been able to offer an established referral network with a social prescription service called Be Well www.gmmh.nhs.uk/bewell. The garden projects have had a demonstrable positive impact on participants including increasing food growing skills, increased consumption of fruit and vegetables, increased physical activity and better mental health plus connecting communities together.

“I think it’s about the building of a community, as much as the growing” Growing Manchester Group Leader.



Routes to commissioning

Sow the City have slowly built a network of NHS contacts partly by seeking out those who already understand the benefits and the 'gatekeepers' within the NHS, who are generally senior people who can make decisions and have budgets. In terms of promoting what they do, they have found that word of mouth is the most effective route and getting known by attending conferences. They have found that adopting a professional business-like approach has worked for them. This has included having a good sales pitch and professional marketing materials, including a brochure and project sheets describing clearly what the service is and why it matters.

They have managed to access funding, from £7K up to £25K, through a variety of routes including NHS/CCG grants programmes, commissioner panels and by providing quotes for work. They also have invited the CCG to visit their projects, which they have always accepted. However, many projects are still commissioned on an annual basis which is difficult in terms of financial stability.



Partnership working

Sow the City has been established since 2009 and is well respected within the city region within food, environmental, VCSE and health networks. The organisation sits on the Good Food Greater Manchester Board, the Greater Manchester Poverty Action Place Based Access to Food Board, and various health sector meetings (e.g. GP area meetings). Sow the City works closely with a wide variety of VCSE sector organisations including disability charities, mental health charities, drug and alcohol recovery groups, BME support organisations, and community groups. The organisation also has good links with universities in the city supporting funded research programmes and PhDs.

Through the Big Dig Greater Manchester website and the Growing Manchester network, Sow the City has developed an online referral system here between the NHS e.g. community mental health teams, neighbourhood health workers and other health agencies, to over 60 community food growing projects. The garden to be referred to is based on an assessment of the interests, need and practicalities of the individual and where and when they are available.

Evaluating outcomes and impact

Sow the City have developed a basic evaluation system for projects and use an Occupational Therapy developed system, plus questionnaires based on research undertaken by Manchester University. Wemwebs is used for more complex projects and where commissioners are more interested in evaluation.

They have not found complex evaluation systems like Social Return on Investment to be helpful, but refer to national research to make their case e.g. health benefits of nature. Most importantly they have found that describing the benefits such as reduced food bills, reduced social isolation, developing new skills, and improved diet as well as individual personal case studies are very effective.

The Growing Manchester Programme has a good geographical spread of projects across the city and has offered many people in the immediate area the opportunity to become involved in food growing who would not otherwise have done so. The outcomes for participants included:

- An increase in their food growing skills was shown to be the most important driver for participants to get involved.
- Widened consumption of fruit and vegetables.
- Engagement in more physical activity through gardening as well as walking to and from the site. Some participants lost a significant amount of weight. Abundant evidence of the therapeutic benefits including improving and calming mood through contact with plants and increasing the confidence via a sense of achievement.

The programme has also resulted in connecting communities together through socialising with others and meeting new people in the community. Many groups have successfully raised awareness of the programme and engaged the local community.

The full evaluation report can be accessed here http://orca.cf.ac.uk/64901/1/UoM-FoodFutures-GrowManc_FINAL.pdf

Other

Sow the City provides wider environmental art and carpentry sessions alongside gardening sessions.

Produced January 2019

Growing Health is a national project run by Garden Organic and Sustain, which is funded by the Tudor Trust, to see how community food growing can be routinely used by the health and social care services as a way of promoting health and wellbeing for a range of individuals and population groups.

To sign up to the Growing Health network visit

www.growinghealth.info

Next steps

Sow the City is looking to move from short term commissions to longer term arrangements with commissioners. They would like to further enhance their evidence base and have spoken to universities and an NHS research unit about them providing a more thorough evaluation of their work. Sow the City is hoping to play a more influential role in the development of food policy within Manchester to support the food growing and wider green health agenda.

Further information

www.sowthecity.org

